



CHAPTER TWO

the garden



Growing up I loved nothing more than collecting beans from Nonna's garden, picking lemons straight off the tree and stuffing only the freshest baby zucchini flowers. There is no greater satisfaction than growing your own fruit and vegetables, seeing them transform from seedlings to plants, then into a delicious dish on the dinner table.

Pesto pasta with roasted tomato, pine nuts and bocconcini

{ SERVES 4 }

INGREDIENTS

- 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) **cherry tomatoes**, halved
- **sea salt flakes**
- **extra-virgin olive oil**, about 125–250 ml (4–8½ fl oz/½–1 cup), depending on how wet you want your pesto, plus extra for drizzling
- 40 g (1½ oz/¼ cup) **pine nuts**, plus extra for garnish
- 100 g (3½ oz/1 bunch) **basil**
- 25 g (1 oz/¼ cup) finely grated **Parmigiano Reggiano**
- 2 **garlic cloves**
- 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) **fresh pasta**
- 200 g (7 oz) **bocconcini**, halved or quartered

METHOD

Preheat the oven to 220°C (430°F).

Place the cherry tomatoes on a baking tray. Season with sea salt and freshly ground black pepper, and drizzle with a little olive oil. Bake for approximately 25–30 minutes, or until blistered and caramelised.

Heat the pine nuts in a frying pan over a medium heat until golden in colour. Set aside.

To make the pesto, blitz the basil, pine nuts, Parmigiano, garlic, olive oil, and a pinch of salt and pepper until all smooth and combined. Set aside.

To cook the pasta, bring a large saucepan of salted water to the boil. Add your fresh pasta and gently stir for a minute. Cook until just *al dente* (this should take no more than 4 minutes, depending on the thickness of the pasta).

Toss the cherry tomatoes, pesto and bocconcini pieces through the pasta and scatter a few pine nuts over the top to serve.

This is one of those recipes that I love making when I don't want to spend too much time on dinner. In my house, there's always a jar of pesto in the fridge, which makes this dish even quicker to throw together. And it makes a really tasty meal! Roasting the tomatoes gives a rich depth of flavour, caramelised crunchy bits and a hint of saltiness. This is another perfect cheese, tomato and basil combination.





Tomato, buffalo mozzarella
and basil pizza

Potato, caramelised onions and rosemary oil pizza





Lobster broth with lobster and tomato ravioli

{ SERVES 4-6 }

I would like to dedicate this recipe to my late Nonna Rosa, one of the biggest influences in my life. For as long as my memory goes back, every single family gathering started with a bowl of brodo (chicken soup) with homemade ravioli. I re-invented this dish on MasterChef for Marco Pierre White, in memory of my nonna.

INGREDIENTS

- **Pasta dough** (page 160)
- 3 tablespoons **extra-virgin olive oil**
- 2 **carrots**, roughly chopped
- 1 **onion**, roughly chopped
- 1 × 3 cm (1¼ in) piece **ginger**, roughly chopped
- 1 **garlic clove**, roughly chopped
- 45 g (1½ oz/½ bunch) **coriander (cilantro) roots**, roughly chopped
- 2 **lobsters**, blanched, tails removed and all shells and heads put aside
- 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) **white port**
- 6 **roma (plum) tomatoes**, 4 roughly chopped, 2 finely chopped
- **sea salt flakes**
- **coriander (cilantro) leaves** to garnish

METHOD

Prepare the pasta dough recipe to the step where it has rested for 30 minutes.

Pour 1 tablespoon of the olive oil into a saucepan and set over a high heat. Add the carrot, the onion, ginger, garlic and coriander roots, and fry for 1–2 minutes. Add the lobster head and shells, and fry until orange. Add the port and heat for 1 minute to cook off the alcohol. Add 4 roughly chopped tomatoes and fry for 1 minute. Add 1.5 litres (51 fl oz/6 cups) of water and bring to the boil. Allow the broth to continue to boil for about 45 minutes until reduced. Remove from the heat, strain and set aside, keeping warm.

Finely dice the lobster tail meat. Pour the remaining olive oil into a frying pan and set over a medium heat. Add the lobster meat and the 2 finely chopped tomatoes, then season with sea salt and freshly ground black pepper and cook until the lobster is just cooked through. Remove from the heat and set aside to cool.

Divide the pasta dough into four portions. Pass the dough through a pasta machine to the thinnest setting. Lay one sheet of dough on a floured work surface. Place 1 tablespoon amounts of lobster filling along the dough, leaving a gap between each, approximately 8 cm (3¼ in). Top with another layer of dough and gently press around the filling to seal. Using a 6.5 cm (2½ in) pastry cutter, cut out the ravioli. Repeat with the remaining dough and filling until you've made 20 ravioli.

Bring a large saucepan of water to the boil over a high heat. Add the ravioli and cook until *al dente*, about 3 minutes. Remove from the water using a slotted spoon.

To serve, place the ravioli in individual bowls and pour over the lobster broth. Garnish with coriander leaves and season with sea salt and freshly ground black pepper.



Roast pork belly

{ SERVES 6 }

Roast pork has always been a favourite in our family. Nonna Rosa would always make roast pork with apple sauce – it was simple yet faultless. Everyone would fight over the pork crackling at the end, and this still happens to this day. This recipe is one of Mum’s favourite things to make when guests come over. It just melts in your mouth like butter!

INGREDIENTS

- 2 kg (4 lb 6 oz) **pork belly**, skin left on and scored
- **extra-virgin olive oil**
- **sea salt flakes**
- 20 g (¾ oz/½ bunch) **sage**
- 2 **rosemary sprigs**
- 5 **garlic cloves**, smashed

METHOD

Preheat the oven to 190°C (370°F).

Rub the pork belly with a little olive oil, some sea salt and freshly ground black pepper, with more salt on the skin as it helps it to crisp up.

Place the pork belly in a roasting tin with the sage, rosemary and smashed garlic cloves, even squashing some garlic into the slits on the belly.

Roast for 2½ hours. To crisp up the skin even further, change the oven setting to grill or turn the oven up to 200°C (390°F) and cook the pork for a further 5–10 minutes. Another option is to simply carve off the skin and place in a 200°C (390°F) oven for 10–15 minutes.

Remove the pork belly from the oven and rest for about 10 minutes before serving.

NOTE: THIS ROAST GOES PERFECTLY WITH THE HEIRLOOM CARROTS (PAGE 58), ROAST POTATOES AND A FRESH ORANGE AND FENNEL SALAD (PAGE 84).



Zia Dora’s famous tiramisu

{ SERVES 6-8 }

My Zia Dora’s famous tiramisu recipe is my absolute favourite dessert. I love the creaminess and lightness, and the combination of chocolate and coffee. It has been in my family for generations. Zia Dora gave it to my mum on her honeymoon in Italy, who then passed it down to me.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 **eggs**, separated
- 3 tablespoons **caster (superfine) sugar**
- 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) **mascarpone**
- 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) **espresso coffee**, cooled
- 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) **dark rum** or **marsala**
- **dark chocolate**, grated for each layer
- 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) **savoirdi (lady fingers) biscuits** (1 large packet)

METHOD

Beat the egg yolks and half the sugar in a bowl for 10–15 minutes until thick and fluffy, and tripled in size. Add the mascarpone and beat until it is fully incorporated.

In a separate bowl, beat the egg whites until stiff peaks form, add the remaining sugar and keep whisking until the sugar has dissolved.

Fold the egg whites into the mascarpone mixture.

In another bowl, mix the coffee and rum/marsala. Dip the biscuits in the coffee and rum mixture.

Arrange a layer of biscuits in the base of a 1.5 litre (51 fl oz/6 cups) capacity bowl or serving dish, then spoon over some of the mascarpone filling, grate some dark chocolate on top, and repeat the layers until your bowl of choice is filled to the top. Finish with the mascarpone mixture. Grate more chocolate over the top and chill in the fridge to set, preferably overnight.

NOTE: SAVOIRDI BISCUITS ARE ALSO KNOWN AS SPONGE FINGER BISCUITS. IF YOU WANT TO HAVE A GO AT COOKING THEM FROM SCRATCH, CHECK OUT MY RECIPE ON PAGE 150.